

# Year 8 Religion & Society - How Should We Live?

## Unit 2: Religious Education - Judaism

### How might holy days remind Jews of their shared values?



#### **1. What are rituals and why are they so important?**

- A ritual is a ceremony (usually religious in nature) consisting of a series of actions performed to a set order.
- We come across rituals in every-day life, they help to give us a strong sense of belonging in our many communities.
- A strong sense of belonging is important because strong, positive communities help us to develop the tools we need for life's journey and support us when we hit obstacles.
- Rituals bring communities together by helping them to:
  - Connect - e.g. Sunday Roast as a family
  - Commit - e.g. Wedding ceremony
  - Celebrate - e.g. Birthday party
  - Commemorate - e.g. Remembrance Day
- Ritual is a very important feature of religion and over the next few lessons we will explore how the many rituals of the Jewish faith brings a strong sense of community and belonging.

#### **2. What is Judaism?**

- Judaism is an ancient religion that can be traced back to 4000 years and has survived despite the many struggles faced by Jewish people in history.
- Jews believe in one eternal God who created the universe and declared a set of rules they should live by.
- These were delivered to Moses and were written down in the Torah, the first part of the Jewish scriptures.
- Jews like Charlie believe they have a special agreement with God called a Covenant where they will follow these rules and in return, they will be God's specially chosen people.
- There are many different types of Jewish people, such as more traditional Orthodox Jews and Liberal Jews.
- Orthodox Jews read the Jewish scriptures more literally and are more cautious of change.
- Reform Jews read the scriptures more liberally and are more willing to adapt their faith to today's society.
- When Jews go to the synagogue, they are more likely to feel closer to God and each other in the Jewish community.

#### **3. What is Shabbat and why is it important?**

- The first story in the Bible is the creation story which says God created the world and everything in it in 6 days.
- On the 7th day God rested. Consequently, Jews have a day of rest where they stop their very busy everyday life.
- This is called Shabbat, or the Sabbath and it starts at sunset on Friday and lasts 25 hours into Sunday.
- During this time Jews are expected to refrain from doing anything that could be described as work and for the most Orthodox of Jews this includes doing anything electronic and they won't turn on the TV, lights, oven, Xbox or phone.
- This is why Shabbat can be very hard for Jews to observe, especially for young people. However, it is also a time when Jews enjoy spending time connecting with their family.
- Every week Jewish families make sure all the work is done to prepare for Shabbat so that they can enjoy it together.
- During Shabbat, several prayers are given over the bread and wine and then a meal is enjoyed together as a family and traditional Hebrew songs are sung. Coming together and sharing meals as a family is a big part of being Jewish.
- A Jew, might feel that they can make a fresh start each week after he or she has enjoyed Shabbat with the family.

#### **4. What is a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and why is it important?**

- The Bat Mitzvah for a boy and Bat Mitzvah for a girl takes place at either the age of 12 or 13 depending on what Jewish tradition you follow. Mitzvah is a Hebrew word meaning commandment from God, so becoming a Bat Mitzvah means becoming a daughter of the commandment and promising to follow God's rules.
- Therefore, this ritual is a coming-of-age ceremony where the Jewish community recognises and celebrates a boy or girl as now being a Jewish adult.
- Young Jews know that they won't become an adult by the laws of the land until they are 18, but they would be able to take on more adult roles and responsibilities in the Jewish community such as at the Synagogue.
- After the ceremony Jews will have a big party with their friends and family to celebrate their coming of age.
- Many Jews feel closer to the Jewish community after this celebration because it is where they make their own personal commitment to their faith community.
- This ceremony has similarities with the Christian Church through the idea of Confirmation (Church of England) or First Holy Communion (Roman Catholic church).

#### **5. What is the story of Moses and the Exodus? & 6. What is Passover and why is it important?**

- One of the most important Jewish events of the year is called Passover or in Hebrew, Pesach. At Passover, Jews remember the exodus of the Jewish people out of Egypt where the Israelites were in slavery for hundreds of years.
- Moses warned the Egyptian leader, the Pharaoh, that God would send terrible plagues on Egypt unless he let God's people go.
- Plague after plague struck the Egyptians, ending up with the death of all Egyptian first-born sons.
- God told Moses that if he the Israelites mark their homes with Lamb's blood they would be spared, and their homes did not have chance to rise which is why at Passover, Jews only eat unleavened bread.
- Everything needs to be ready for Passover Seder, a special meal on the first night.
- Each specific piece of food on the Seder plate reminds Jews what it was like for the Hebrew Slaves in Egypt so that Jews today can experience the exodus all over again each year. For example, the charoset is a paste made from sugar, cinnamon, apple, wine and nuts which represents the mortar used by the slaves when building the pyramids. The egg and meat, reminds Jews of the offerings made to God in the holy temple in Jerusalem. Bitter herbs like horseradish help Jews to remember the bitter suffering of the slaves. Finally, the vegetable karpas (Parsley) is dipped in salt water to remember the tears of the Hebrew slaves.
- Observing this holy day and participating in this ritual helps Jews them to connect with God and each other as part of a faith community. It enables them to commemorate the suffering of their ancestors in Egypt but also celebrate God delivering his people from slavery and providing for them as his children of the commandment, his chosen people.